

Seminar 2A. Faces in the Crowd. Sociology and Historical Method

Intro. Title given me by Prof. K.

OK; but remember: soc. historian and no sociologist.

Sorry this may turn out to be more of an APOLOGIA than a guide to Method... Study of Popular Protest in "pre-industrial" society an expanding field since 1950s: work of EJH, EPT and Richard C. in England; Soboul in France; and Tilly in USA. We all attempt to study history "from below"; but evident differences:

EJH a "labour" historian, an economist & something of an anthropologist; EPT also a labour historian; but one concerned more with mentalite and cultural traditions. Also a moralist (like Hammonds). Both concerned with history of class and social groups.

Cobb, however, more concerned with case studies of individual, and suspicious of terms like "crowds", sans-culottes and "collectives". Latest focus on marginaux, criminals and underworld (see Reactions to Fr. Rev.)

Soboul's concern with politics as seen "from below"; esp. militants of Paris sections during Fr. Rev.

My own "thing" somewhat different from all:

My concern has been with the Crowd, but also with the Faces: hence title of my lectures and this seminar. (This preoccupation has got me some knocks: see TLS review on "Overcrowding". You may feel the same..)

As our focus is different, so are our "approaches" and Methods of enquiry.

Here I shall talk more particularly of my own.

I. General Approach.

"Approach" a vague term. Mine is, I believe, an inductive one: ie to be very concerned with the FACTS and to generalise, or "modellise", from these as I see them & interpret them - ie to attempt to look through the TELESCOPE at both ends. *Details in primary, etc. fragment & hard (hopefully) new out of chaos [like Hammonds' "structural" method?]*

"Approach" includes also the bias and "assumptions" one brings to one's research. No researcher comes to the records with an entirely open mind; and I think there is some virtue in coming to terms with one's bias.

My assumptions may, I suppose, be called MARXIST: I see protest as a result of tensions in class society; I believe in the close interrelationship between material conditions and ideas (ideology); and conflict as a necessary part of progress.

Others start with other assumptions: the political philosophy of BURKE; the ideas of JS MILL; WEBER or the RC Church; others in Original Sin. Such assumptions only become a menace if they serve to close doors rather than to open them.

My own starting hypothesis in 1948.... W=C. as paying a dist. role in Fr. Rev. *Wrong!*

II. 2. Method of Enquiry

Basically, this boils down to (a) asking certain questions and (b) looking for the answers: Both depend on one's "approach".

1. The Questions.

In my own case: 2 types of basic question: (1) Questions to establish the facts: "D'Abord il faut etablir les faits"; and (2) Questions to explain them. BUT no Wall of BABYLON: close interplay between the two.

(primary)* 1. The Factual Questions: When? Where? What?

No joking, you may say; but not so obvious as it may sound:

Ranke no longer fashionable: see Annales broadside v1 "histoire evenementielle" more fashionable emphasis on "how" and "Why" (Cobban); and danger of facts-for-their-own-sake or antiquarianism...

But details, in themselves boring, are essential to study of certain types of social history: "what" and "Where" often give clue to why?

cf Lefebvre's Grande Peur of 1789; and my own experience with:

Gordon Riots: changing nature & direction of attack;

1775; 1793; Swing riots 1830.... So fact and explanation blend.

2. Related questions: How and Who.

(1) How an extension of WHAT: how did the crowd behave= what did it do?

* Ask natural questions before one's common sense
Why did it happen in this rather than that way?
* Curiousness in common sense - intriguing but check
Also how one interprets the answers *(Mitchell?)*

Action for

3. The Question WHO? Neglected for long; but I am concerned with FACES:
 Who took the Bastille? Who was Captain Swing? Who killed Cock Robin?
 Not only Who Killed him; but sort of person was he: age; trade; past; future etc.
 Not only the Rioters but their Victims: this also throws light on motivation:
 see Gordon Riots.
4. The explanatory question: Why? The most tricky & difficult to answer:
 Operates at 3 levels:
 (1) Why did event take place? Price of food; political sit. etc.
 (2) Why did some take part & others not? (a more particular question.)
 (2) Deeper motivation: not only food prices, wages, political commitment;
 but pop. mentalite, "generalised beliefs", ideology underlying
 inherent ideology etc.

III. The Sources and Evidence

1. To answer the factual What-where-when questions:

Traditional sources:
 Press; Memoirs; official & private correspondence;
 Parl. reports.
 Very useful in France: Police reports: observers and proces-verb.
 " England: H.O. corresp.; Treas. solicitors

- 2 snags (1) Evident bias & hostility to MOB;
 (2) Disappearance of records: 1871; WWII; pilfering (convicts).

2. To answer question WHO?

The basic document: The LIST:

list of members of pop. socs (Cobb); Vainqueurs de la Bastille
 (Wilkes 1789); lists of voters; jurymen; petitioners
 also trial records: QS ASS. etc. 1
 (Wilkes 1789); taxation rolls (for those wealthy enough); lists of
 householders. The CENSUS, eg NSW 1828; shipping lists and convict indents.

The special value of the French Procès-verbal: Personal and "alive"
 Radical cook Constance Eyraud of 1791;
 the furious Cornu: je ne signe plus...
 Mouy example of 1775. (ante).

But limitations: only a sample of those taking part (except Bastille, Wilkes
 voters of 1768-9).

3. To answer WHY?

- 1) Direct evidence from participants' own lips: ~~very~~ RARE (why)

(a) correspondence - v. rare & why...

(b) More helpful again: French p/v.

also O.B. reports; convict indents in Tas. in 1840s.

- 2) But generally we have to infer from:

(a) the events themselves (above)... circumstantial evidence...

(b) Movements of prices (Labrousse); Gent's Mag; Parl. reports...

(c) Accounts in contemp. press

(d) Mentalite & cultural trad. see EPT: songs & hymns; Mandrou on Lib. Bleue
 & colportage;

So how do I end? $\frac{11}{2}$???????

IV Answer on research - lots.
 One's field-work (Tasmania)
 The Cambridge Cobb's account
 my on expenses 1966-7.